

Facts for Consumers



It's never too early to save your skin — or your children's — from the sun. The sun produces invisible rays — ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) — that can cause short- and long-term skin damage.

The immediate effects of harmful sun rays — sunburn, photosensitive reactions (rashes), and cell and tissue damage — are bad enough. But medical experts believe that too much exposure to the sun in childhood or adolescence is a major cause of skin cancer and premature skin aging later in life. Health experts also believe that UVA may weaken the immune system.

You can take steps early and often to minimize the sun's harmful effects. Using sunscreens regularly on children, for example, can reduce their risk of skin damage later in life.

Sunscreens provide some protection by blocking the sun's rays on the skin. They are labeled with a sun protection factor (SPF): the higher the SPF, the greater the protection against harmful sun rays. But no sunscreen totally blocks the sun's rays. Even people wearing high SPF sunscreens get some exposure. To minimize the damage:

- ✱ Use water-resistant sunscreens that help protect skin from both UVA and UVB rays and have SPF numbers of at least 15.
- ✱ Apply sunscreen liberally (at least one large handful) about 30 minutes before going outside. No matter what sun-

screen product is used, reapply it after swimming, toweling, or any vigorous activity that causes heavy perspiration. Toweling off can remove even water-resistant sunscreens.

- ✱ Talk with camp counselors and others with child care responsibilities about reapplying sunscreens after children play hard, perspire, or swim.
- ✱ Remember to apply sunscreen to children's skin even when they are under a beach umbrella. The sun's rays can reflect off surrounding concrete or sand.

Protecting Kids

To help protect children from the sun's damaging effects:

- ✱ Remember the sun is strongest from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Schedule children's outdoor activities accordingly.
- ✱ Dress children for maximum protection. Hats with brims and tightly woven, long-sleeved shirts and pants offer the best defense.
- ✱ Select sunglasses that help screen out both UVA and UVB rays. UV rays may contribute to the development of cataracts. Sunglasses that are close-fitting and have big lenses offer more protection.
- ✱ Keep babies younger than six months out of the sun. Sunscreens may irritate



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baby skin, and an infant's developing eyes are especially vulnerable to sunlight.

Teenagers who work outside as lifeguards, gardeners, or construction workers may be at special risk for skin damage. They need adequate protection before going out in the sun. In addition, try to discourage them from going to tanning parlors. Like the sun, tanning devices can damage the skin and eyes.

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in this country. Medical experts are diagnosing it more often than ever, especially in young people. They believe too much sun exposure in the early years may be responsible.

Two types of skin cancer, basal cell and squamous cell, usually are treatable if detected early. Basal cell often develops on the face, ears, lips, and around the mouth of fair-skinned people. Squamous cell usually appears as a scaly patch or raised, wart-like growth. Melanoma, another type of skin cancer, is the most dangerous. It can occur anywhere on the body. Early detection is crucial for successful treatment.

Several factors are associated with increased risk of developing skin cancer, including:

- ✱ several blistering sunburns as a child or teenager;
- ✱ a family history of skin cancer;

- ✱ light-colored skin, hair, and eyes; and
- ✱ moles that are irregular in shape or color.

For More Information

For information about skin cancer or skin damage, contact your family doctor, dermatologist, or:

Cancer Information Service (CIS)
1-800-4-CANCER

American Cancer Society (ACS)
1-800-ACS-2345

American Academy of Dermatology
P.O. Box 4014
Schaumburg, IL 60168-4014
www.aad.org

In addition, the FTC publishes a number of brochures on health and fitness. For your copy of **Best Sellers**, a complete list of FTC publications, contact: Consumer Response Center, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580, 202-326-2222/ TDD: 202-326-2502. You also can access FTC publications at www.ftc.gov on the Internet.

